



City of Bloomington

Common Council

Council comments regarding Resolution 18-24

Res 18-24 Approving the Issuance of Tax Increment Revenue Bonds of the City of Bloomington Redevelopment District to Finance the Costs of Acquisition and Construction for Two Parking Garages in the Bloomington Consolidated Economic Development Area and Costs Incurred in Connection with the Issuance of Such Bonds

→ On Wednesday, 24 October 2018, the Council voted to forego final comment on Resolution 18-24 and instead reduce their comments to writing and send those comments to Council Office by Noon, 26 October 2018. Council staff were directed to post the same to the Council's webpage and to circulate among applicable City staff. The following are the comments the Office received.

Isabel Piedmont-Smith

I think it's unfortunate we have both the 4th St. Garage and the Trades District Garage in the same bond proposal. I am in favor of building a new 4th St. Garage as long as it's convertible space that can at least partially be used for housing and commercial purposes in the future. As to the garage in the Trades District, I am more hesitant. It seems like we have the opportunity here to shape a district that runs on the principles of sustainability, with housing, offices, and retail in close proximity. I am not sure we need to have a garage there to stimulate investment.

Susan Sandberg

I appreciate differing views on the future of transportation and the projections and predictions about a vision for Bloomington that is less likely to include personal cars. It is appropriate that we engineer our city with multi-modal transportation options in mind. My position leans toward the current realities of parking strains and challenges that require government leadership to deal with the present parking demands.

I support this bond funding for both garages, particularly in thinking about building a new structure on 4th Street that has greater capacity than the current facility. As the current garage is growing more unsafe with degradation and age, we can no longer slap a bandaid on it if we are to meet current and future demand. Parking demands are great now and are critically important for

the economic health of downtown commerce, restaurants, arts venues, public services, libraries and museums, church engagement and social services. The appeals from WonderLab were compelling in thinking about how out of town visitors will be less likely to engage with this downtown museum without parking availability. Our world class arts organizations attract more than just local bike riders to their theaters and performances. I was intrigued with the idea of building a parking garage to meet the demands of now and future decades that can also be repurposed into another use should that downturn in car usage indeed become a reality.

Regarding the Trades District garage, I see the wisdom of building this infrastructure in anticipation of the future healthy development of this area, a necessary economic development driver to attract the businesses and good paying jobs that this area was designed to grow. While we can all think about a myriad ways to spend Bloomington dollars, we can't ignore the vital importance of economic development in also having the resources to support other pressing social challenges. Attracting good jobs with good wages is another critically important growth area that needs public sector support.

As American and world circumstances change, we as a community will have the political will and the strategic ability to change and adapt to those new societal challenges and demands. In the here and now, we need to accommodate the wide range of transportation options that residents of all ages, abilities and commercial needs will need in order to function in this vibrant city. It is completely unrealistic to think about the near future or the next decade without personal vehicles, and those vehicles will need places to park in order to keep the downtown cooking on all the burners. If and when this transportation dynamic changes, we will be fully capable of adapting to that new reality.

Steve Volan

Colleagues -- I support the redevelopment of the 4th St. garage, if for no other reason than it provides an opportunity to return Walnut Street between 3rd and 4th to a true urban street through first-floor retail, just like our other two garages. However, I have asked for an amendment to be drawn up for Res. 18-24, cutting the Trades District garage out of the bond. I do not support bonding for a garage there at this time, for the many reasons below.

1. Data was misstated and exaggerated

The presentation of the proposal misrepresents and selectively reads the Desman study. For starters, data cited was backwards: 1500 spaces is the expectation of demand in the Trades District and 1200 near the Convention Center, not the other way around as Mr. Crowley or Mr. Wason said. The administration on Wednesday verbally summarized this "need" as "2700 spaces," lumping them together, and in so doing, claiming an undue urgency for the Trades District garage by associating it with the urgency to replace the 4th Street garage.

Regarding the 1200 spaces "needed" near the Convention Center, neither Council nor the RDC were told that Desman expects (Sec. 6.2.2) only 700 net new parking spaces there, that 500 were already available. And it doesn't take into account for how many of those will be provided by the new 4th St. Garage.

2. Estimate of cost of a structured parking space has mysteriously shrunk

The amount the administration had been estimating as the cost of a structured parking space was \$27,000. (I know this because it was their figure I cited less than a week ago to draw up the initial Reasonable Condition 5 to Ord 18-14, the Century Village PUD, which had structured parking that I want to see cut.) In their presentation Wednesday, the administration's estimate per garage space was now \$24,000. Where did these numbers come from, and why did it change?

3. Assertions of "demand" were misstated as "need"

The administration specifically claims a "need" for 1500 spaces to justify building 400 spaces in the Trades District now. The Desman study uses this phrase (emphases mine): "demand once fully developed (as much as 1500 spaces)" (p. 28). Desman says on the same page, "Of course, as the development progresses, there will be ample opportunity to revisit the parking needs [sic] based on the characteristics of the on-site tenants and the amount of private parking being provided on-site." Desman throughout its study recommends the city manage demand for parking. Demand is different than need -- we expect people to pay for the things they demand.

4. The Parking Commission was not consulted

While the 4th Street Garage problem has been discussed by the Parking Commission before the administration brought it up, a Trades District Garage bond has not been contemplated by or presented to the Commission. Even though this bond is three times larger than the three trails-bond proposals, the Commission was not consulted at all.

5. Expense of bonding the Trades garage separately is the equivalent of only 8 new spaces

Let those who would build come and present their plans for private parking -- what we ask every other developer to do. Let us then ask what they will do to actively decrease demand for car travel. It doesn't have to go to zero, but we also don't have to be the providers of a gold-plated space for every employee of this zone. (It was supposed to be a live-work zone for at least some employees.)

The cost of issuing a bond for a Trades District garage separately is 8 to 9 parking spaces (at \$27,000/space). Before borrowing the money to build 400 spaces now -- when there won't be anything else there "needing" it until at least four years from now -- it's absolutely worth it to wait to figure out what the actual "need" will be.

6. Construction of garages by the city is mentioned nowhere in the Comprehensive Plan

The Comp Plan does not say the city needs to build parking to attract development. It does not say that the city should be building garages. Nowhere in the chart that describes the programs the city should undertake regarding transportation (on p. 124) does it say that structured parking is a necessity to be built by anyone.

That same chart recommends these two programs: "Regularly examine parking demand, utilization, and alternatives in the Downtown area and City-wide... Develop a Parking Management Program for the Downtown area that supports downtown businesses while encouraging a walkable, urban core." (Comp Plan p. 124) Where is that plan?

7. No plan to manage transportation demand

The administration is attempting to increase capacity in an area before developers have decided how much parking they will build privately. If anything, developers are demanding that the city build the parking for them. Desman clearly recommends a different course of action (emphases mine):

Section 6.3: "As downtown Bloomington continues to develop, the City should have a definitive policy regarding the provision of parking." (Desman p. 29)

"1.e. Over the long-term, if the City continues the policy of providing most of the parking downtown, there may be a need for additional facilities, unless demand for parking is reduced. There are a number of transportation demand management techniques which may be used to reduce parking demand in downtown Bloomington." (Desman p. 29)

The administration has come with this sudden proposal while having yet to write a plan to reduce demand for parking in the Trades District. This is what a TDM policy would look like (emphases mine):

Multi-modal transportation planning is an essential component of Transportation Demand Management (TDM). Many communities including Bloomington and the Indiana University-Bloomington campus pursue TDM, which is the application of strategies and policies to reduce travel demand, or to redistribute this demand in space or in time. Managing demand can be a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to increasing capacity, both for vehicle movement (traffic lanes and streets), and for parking. (Comp Plan p. 68)

8. Use cheaper methods short-term to gauge demand

"Land dedicated to parking should be minimized by building, preferring multi-story parking garages to surface parking lots, and by encouraging active transportation (bicycling and walking)." (Comp Plan p. 86)

While this clause appears to prioritize garages over lots, this preference does not apply in a greenfield. If the demand for parking must be addressed by the city, in the short term let us create gravel or paved lots first, and establish a downtown shuttle to allow cheaper parking farther afield. Both would be substantially cheaper than this garage.

9. Determine what parking developers will build first

A more efficient way to build the parking is to let the companies build their own as they need it, as Desman notes the residential projects in this area are doing, and Tasus will be doing with a surface lot when it opens.

Given the uncertainties over design of the parcels, the number of on-site spaces being provided and the timing of the various pieces of the development, we have assumed that the TASUS development would be completed by 2020 and then one third of the remaining development would be completed and occupied every other year. (Desman p. 28)

Desman notes that 500 spaces is an estimate for 150,000 SF and 30,000 SF of retail. These private spaces should be subject to maximums, not minimums. What is the administration planning to do to require corporate occupants of the Trades District to implement their own management of transportation demand? If it will take 18-24 months to demolish and rebuild the 4th St garage, it won't take any longer to build one in the Trades District new. This gives the administration until 2020 to research and develop a more detailed plan for one, and still hit their would-be target, but after doing more thorough consulting, they'll find the result will be less or no "need" for city-built structured parking.

10. Parking should pay for itself or it generates unsustainable outcomes

We should build no new garages that cannot pay for themselves through revenues alone. TIF revenue for garages would be a subsidy for parking, period. It goes against the principles on which the Parking Commission was founded, and on which Ordinance 18-11 was just passed. Our goal should be to build no new publicly-owned parking, and to limit the amount of parking that can be privately built.

Conclusion

The proposal for the Trades District garage is premature, and its presentation in this rushed manner, with vague data and empty claims of "need," goes against the recommendations of Desman, the policies of the Comp Plan, and the best interests of the city. Proposing a new garage before writing a TDM plan is an irresponsible use of borrowed capital dollars.

That a garage might be built as convertible space is not a good enough reason to build it -- if this is truly a "Bicentennial Bond," as the Mayor has liked to style it, these dollars should be going to build buildings that will last 200 years, not 50. This may be "economic" development, but building structured parking that induces private vehicle miles traveled is in no way "sustainable" development anywhere.

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